

Remarks

Claims 20-26 remain pending in this application. Claim 27 is similar to an earlier form of claim 20 and has been added to allow appropriate coverage in the event an appeal is necessary.

In the examiner's July 2, 2004 advisory action, it was suggested that the amendments did not place the application in condition for allowance, but that the amendments were entered for purposes of appeal. Claim 20 stands rejected as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,902,423 issued to Bacino. Claims 21-26 stand rejected as being unpatentably obvious considering Bacino in view of alleged admitted prior art in the Applicant's own specification.

In the Advisory Action, the examiner explains that the claimed interconnection of nodes by short fibers between the nodes contained within each aggregation is disclosed in Bacino at Col. 4, lines 43-50. The proper interpretation of this section, however, does not agree with this finding. The proper interpretation is that transverse fibrils are created between nodes in different aggregations. Any other interpretation would be inconsistent with FIG. 2 of the Bacino disclosure – which shows that the nodes within each aggregation are not expanded. As can be seen in the figure, the Bacino material includes long fibrils connecting rows of transverse fibrillated nodes. The short bundles extend transversely between aggregations. Not between the nodes within each aggregation. Thus, the Bacino aggregates are not expanded in the way claimed.

Therefore, we submit that because all of the claimed limitations are not shown in the prior art, amended claims 20-26 and new claim 27 be allowed. If, however, the Examiner

believes that any outstanding issues remain, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marshall', followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line that extends to the right.

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